UNPACKING THE MATRIX
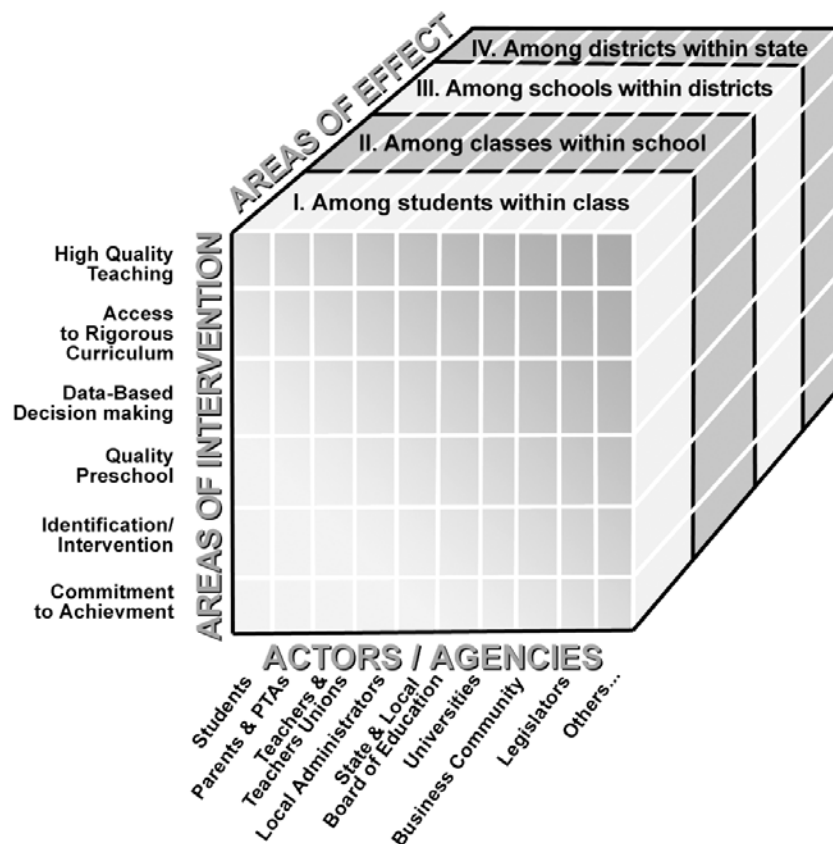# THE PLANNING AGENDA

Achievement Initiative for Maryland's Minority Students
Maryland State Department of Education

Achievement Initiative for Maryland's Minority Students (AIMMS) Council

Achievement Initiative for Maryland's Minority Students Steering Committee

Acknowledgment

The Maryland State Department of Education extends thanks to the AIMMS Steering Committee members who contributed to this document. Special gratitude is given to Dr. Gary Gottfredson, Dr. John Lee, Dr. John Larson, and Dr. Barbara Dezmon, Chair, for their work on the Matrix in this book, and to Dr. Dezmon for her efforts toward connecting the Matrix and Planning.

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Introduction

Education is entering an era where the demands for accountability related to the work and funding are increasing. Along that same line, the need for the construction of strategically oriented plans becomes increasingly necessary. As the factors that impact educational agencies and schools become more complex, as the students needs become more diverse, it is ever more important that targeted strategies be developed to meet these situations. To assist educators, the Matrix provides a tool to help in the phases of planning – pre, during, and post. First the Matrix helps education and community leaders view the global circumstances and exigencies impacting education and their agencies in a simplified, concise format. The Matrix Framework aids by providing focus on the key areas of interventions, areas of effect, and the role of stakeholders who must address those areas. During the planning process, the Matrix enhances communication and simulates dialog about key issues that must be attended by planners. The Matrix also provides a structure for the development of such essential planning components as critical analysis, goals, objectives, and strategies. With its emphasis on both macro and micro processes, the Matrix provides built-in links between systemwide and local school planning procedures. Additionally, a macro-matrix developed at the state or systemwide level serves as a guide and rubric to be used by local schools in their planning. This tool also assists planners in evaluation by establishing a context for assessment. It avoids having to shuffle through tens or hundreds of pages of text to find who is doing what and when. The matrix becomes a summary of and a key to the agency's, system's, or school's plan.

The Matrix Approach has not been developed or intended as a prescriptive device. The various uses for the Matrix included in this handbook are suggestions only. Agencies and schools may find these approaches satisfactory or may want to use their own variations. The Matrix generally acts as a thread to furnish consistency and continuity throughout the different segments of the planning discipline. The Matrix functions in a similar way as planning proceeds from the systemwide (macro) to the local school and department (micro) levels. It prevents planners involved at various stages from depending only on their interpretations of factors that drove the planning that preceded them. The Matrix Cube is a very user-friendly tool to provide a variety of publics with graphic portrayal of their roles in the education of children.

THE MATRIX FRAMEWORK

Matrix Framework
A Synopsis[1]
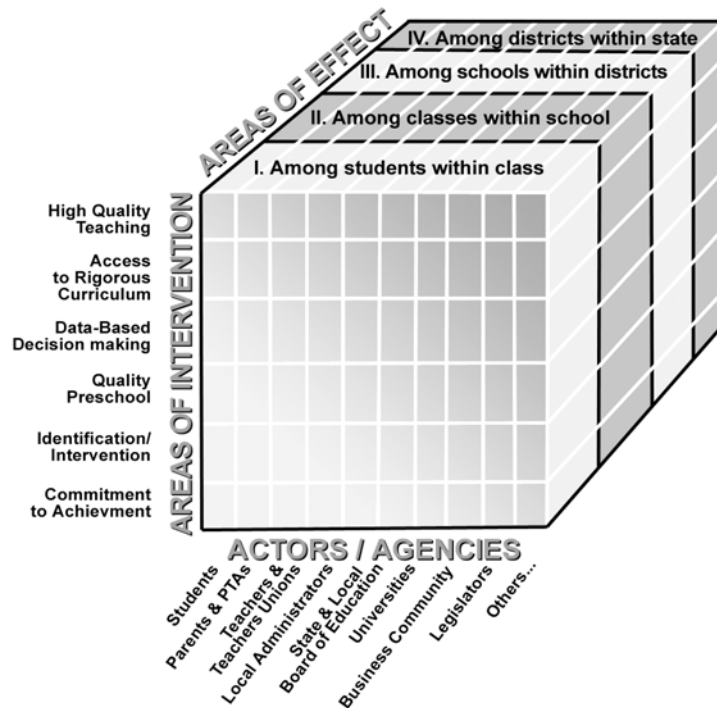
The Matrix provides an instrument for focusing, summarizing, and then addressing achievement issues that have become more and more complicated over time. Although the Matrix helps set the action agenda for accelerating achievement among minority students, the action agenda is applicable to all students. Primary among its practical functions, the Matrix promotes positive public relations and enhances communication with all stakeholders. To that end, it clearly specifies the required roles and responsibilities of stakeholders within and outside the organization to obtain common goals.   It also becomes a means for concisely informing many publics of the positive direction of the educational agency. Most important, for the Matrix to work effectively, it cannot be treated as a static summary about what an organization or agency currently does. Rather, it must be used as an instrument that helps us gain perspective on where we are and then plan for where we want to be.

In setting the action agenda, the Matrix first shows where we have to see improved results. The Areas of Effect include: (1) the gap between average district minority group performance and the state goal for performance; (2) the difference between a schools's average minority student performance and the district's average minority performance; (3) the difference between the student's class's average minority student performance and the school's average minority performance; and (4) the difference between the individual student's performance and the average performance of others in his or her class. (Again, although the focus is on minority and low SES

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[1]For a full description of the Matrix, refer to *Fulfilling the Promise: Action Agenda for Maryland's Minority Students– the Matrix Framework*. This publication is available at www.msde.state.md.us on the Minority Achievement in Maryland webpages.

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students, the concepts are applicable to all students.)

Next, the Matrix focuses on the where to concentrate efforts to obtain desired results, or the Areas of Intervention as detailed here.

- Recruitment, selection, and retention of personnel who can deliver high quality instruction and who can rapidly learn to deploy improved instructional methods. This includes initially well prepared and continually re-prepared (re-trained) teachers and administrators.
- Equitable and wide-spread access to appropriate high-level educational opportunities
- Data-based feedback on educational outcomes for all students at all levels of educational systems.
- Quality preschool preparation for school.
- Identification and intervention when any student falls behind expected educational progress.
- Students, parents, teachers, administrators, board members, and legislators are committed to high levels of academic achievement for all groups of students.

The Matrix, as shown in Tables 1 and 2, helps us identify the roles of individuals or groups who must participate in order to accomplish the desired outcomes – the Actors or Agencies. Alignment of efforts to generate high achievement among Maryland's minority students occurs when multiple actors are all doing their part with respect to each domain (quality personnel, equitable high-level opportunity, etc.) and when progress is being made in each domain at each level of education (classroom, school, district, and state). Overall, the Framework assists in expediting necessary actions to address achievement. The Matrix furnishes a portal into the actualization of reform paradigms essential for education now and into the future.

Information accumulated in the Matrix table assists in a variety of ways during planning and makes planning easier. Developing a matrix helps in establishing the guidance system for the planning process. By reviewing the completed matrix cells, planners can conduct a review of the mission and beliefs statements for relevancy. (See Tables 1 and 2, pgs. 6-10.) The tables give a dose of reality that helps set up planning policies and parameters that guide that for which we will or will not plan. As planners, we can more readily distinguish that which is within as well as beyond our control. Next, the Matrix table is useful in identifying what the agency or school system is doing well or strengths; what needs improvement or weaknesses; as well as opportunities and threats. In planning, this component is referred to as the critical analysis of conditions impacting the mission of the school system from within and without.

Just completing the Matrix table requires acknowledgment of these areas. The cells in the table can help us develop and refine goals as well as objectives and strategies. The table and its cells form a structure on which to base action plans that, just as the cells indicate roles and responsibilities, detail who will do what and when to realize the strategies and reach objectives and ultimate goals. The Matrix Framework table provides a concise picture and exposes gaps in planning and services as well as lack of quality control by key actors. Gaps or blank cells can also indicate roots for dysfunction or disequilibrium in the organization regarding its mission. Gaps in the table can help predict needs and determine priorities. As stated previously, the Matrix is an organizational tool that can serve multiple purposes as a preface to planning as well during planning and implementation. Its exact use depends on how the agency or school system feels it serves best.

Table 1

The Concerted Efforts of Many Different Actors are Required in the Achievement Initiative for Maryland's Minority Students

	Participant										
Approach to enhancing minority achievement	Students	Parents and PTAs	Teachers and teachers' unions	School principals and other local administrators	Local and state boards of education and CACs	State administrators	Teacher training institutions	Research institutions	Courts	Legislators	Faith community and business community
Quality personnel and instruction	Treat educators with respect.	Advocate and vote for personnel resources.	Work to develop reforms to staff low performing schools with quality educators.	Select and supervise teachers. Assign best teachers where needed most.	Select administrators dedicated to improving minority achievement.	Promulgate regulations, seek funding, lead parties to consensus on staffing reforms.	Select and retain talented students and prepare them to educate a diverse population.	Publish research on teacher selection and effective practices.	Adjudicate in cases alleging inequity in access to quality personnel.	Establish programs to attract teachers in areas with poor selection ratios.	Major industries share expertise in personnel recruitment & selection with schools.
Equitable high-level opportunity	Plan for, prepare selves for, and enroll in high-level courses.	Advise their children to tackle tough courses; advocate for childrens' placement.	Treat students equitably in classes and access to classes. Prepare self to teach high level material.	Treat students equitably in access to classes. Recruit personnel who can deliver high level instruction.	Demand equitable access to advanced instruction.	Hold LEAs accountable for equitable access and provision of high level instruction.	Through initial and programs of continuing study prepare teachers serving minority populations for AP instruction.	Conduct research on equity of access to GT and AP courses.	Adjudicate in cases alleging inequity in access to advanced courses.	Fund training for educators to deliver high level courses. Legislate on equity of access.	Conduct teach-ins on current inequities.
Feedback on outcomes	Participate whole heartedly in assessment programs. Analyze implications of results for own learning.	Review own child's progress; help child plan for advancement.	Analyze assessment results to identify where instructional changes would be beneficial. Support innovative accountability systems.	Analyze assessment results as part of performance review for staff and to identify areas where instructional changes would be beneficial.	Include assessment of minority achievement in review of administrators' performance.	Promote the availability of appropriate assessment materials and programs. Devise useful test feedback system.	Evaluate teacher training programs in terms of educational outcomes of students taught by alumni.	Develop improved ways of analyzing outcomes. Devise ways to evaluate instructors and schools in relation to expected educational growth.	Adjudicate in cases alleging persistent failure to improve educational outcomes for minorities.	Pass legislation (with funding) for assessment programs tracking individual progress and linking it with teachers and classes experienced.	Sponsor events in which assessment data become the focus of community planning to improve education.

Note. Cell entries are illustrative and are not intended to be definitive or exhaustive.

Continued . . .

Table 1 (Continued)

Approach to enhancing minority achievement	Participant										
	Students	Parents and PTAs	Teachers and teachers' unions	School principals and other local administrators	Local and state boards of education and CACs	State administrators	Teacher training institutions	Research institutions	Courts	Legislators	Faith community and business community
Teacher preparation and re-training			Diligently learn classroom management and instructional methods.	Arrange for periodic continuing education in areas of need.	Require continuing education in multicultural education and in areas of instructional need.		Train beginning teachers for managing instruction in heterogenous groups and to provide advanced instruction in areas of need.	Conduct process and outcome evaluations of training interventions to determine if they enhance minority achievement.		Create scholarship programs, training programs, focused on preparing teachers to instruct economically handicapped or minority students.	Develop recognition programs for outstanding examples of teacher preparation and re-training.
Preschool preparation		Meet the health, mental health, and cognitive needs of children. Develop emergent literacy skills.	Advocate for quality preschool programs.	Administer preschool programs focusing on early educational readiness of minority children.			Train preschool educators to introduce literacy skills to minority or poor children.	Conduct process and outcome evaluations of preschool programs to determine if they enhance minority achievement.	Adjudicate in cases of alleged inequity in access to preschool programs.	Fund preschool programs for minority or economically handicapped children.	Develop and implement high quality preschool programs focused on pre-literacy skills and integrating health screening.

Note. Cell entries are <u>illustrative</u> and are not intended to be definitive or exhaustive.

Table 1 (Continued)

	Participant										
Identification and intervention	Ask for help with educational difficulties.	Request assessment of children when difficulties are suspected.	Apply diagnostic processes that distinguish learning disabilities from cultural differences. Conduct instruction matched to diverse student needs.	Review assessment results child by child to identify those who may need intervention.	Require main-streamed educational inter-ventions for children with special needs.		Train future educators in skills needed to meet diverse student needs in regular or accelerated classes.	Evaluate identification and intervention programs (including special education) to learn effects on minority achieve-ment.		Ensure sufficient funding for training teachers in identifica-tion and intervention to accelerate minority achieve-ment.	Use preschool and faith-related early education as vehicles for early behavioral health screening for children.
Commitment to achievement	Set specific difficult achievement goals, make and execute plans to improve achieve-ment. Support a climate of commitment to education.	Reward students for achieve-ment, school attendance, and good school conduct. Encourage high educational goals.	Assist students in setting and achieving difficult goals. Provide incentives for progress towards goals.	Assist teachers and schools set specific, difficult goals for minority achieve-ment. Reward teachers and schools for approaching goals.	Require schools and districts to set specific difficult goals for minority achieve-ment.	Assist districts with a process for setting their own specific difficult goals for minority achieve-ment.	Instill in students enthusiasm for the pursuit of high achievement for minority and economi-cally disadvantaged students.	Conduct research on the process of organizational goal setting and achieve-ment. Study the relation between student, teacher, and educator commitment and student educational outcomes.		Emphasize teachings related to personal commitment and effort as an investment of one's talents.	

Note. Cell entries are <u>illustrative</u> and are not intended to be definitive or exhaustive.

Table 2
Different Actors or Change Agents Have Special Roles in Addressing Different Components of Achievement Shortfalls

Agent	Source of discrepancy between performance and standard			
	Among students within classes	Among classes within schools	Among schools within districts	Among districts within state
Students	Expenditure effort	Course selections (advanced/general)		
Parents and PTAs	Communication and follow-up with teachers		Choices of residential location; school selection	Choices of residential location
Teachers and teachers' unions	Instructional methods/skills	Teacher competencies; priorities for teaching assignments	Negotiations on rules for assignment and mobility among schools	Encouragement of pay incentives for service in under-served communities
Local administrators	Staff development in methods for instruction of heterogeneous classes	Teacher and student assignments; supervision of teaching personnel	Development of strategies to ensure equitable staffing of schools	
State and local boards of education		Policies regarding tracking, special education, and GT assignments	Resource allocations; assignment of administrators across schools	Resource allocations; policies regarding equity and staffing quality
State administrators	Accountability and monitoring systems	Accountability and monitoring systems	Accountability and monitoring systems	Resource allocation; incentives and sanctions; accountability and monitoring systems
Teacher training institutions	Preparation of teachers for coping with heterogeneous classes of students	Quality control level of preparation of graduates		Recruitment and admission of students from under-served areas
Research institutions	Develop improved methods of instruction for all students	Research on within-school stratification of educational outcomes; improved methods of input-output analysis	Research on sources of school performance differences; improved methods of input-output analysis	Research on sources of between district differences in educational performance

Note. Cell entries are <u>illustrative</u> and are not intended to be definitive or exhaustive.   Continued . . .

Table 2 (Continued)

| Agent | Source of discrepancy between performance and standard | | | |
	Among students within classes	Among classes within schools	Among schools within districts	Among districts within state
Courts	Adjudication of cases alleging disparate treatment	Adjudication of cases alleging disparate treatment	Adjudication of cases alleging disparate treatment	Adjudication of cases alleging disparate treatment
Legislators				Provision for equitable funding
Faith and business communities	After school educational assistance programs	Teach-ins regarding educational inequities	Teach-ins regarding educational inequities; lobbying for equitable resources	Teach-ins regarding educational inequities; lobbying for equitable resources

Note. Cell entries are <u>illustrative</u> and are not intended to be definitive or exhaustive.

THE MATRIX
AND
PLANNING

Planning and Minority Students

With changing demographics, growing migration of minorities to the suburbs, and the personal, economic, and social consequences of not effectively educating minority and poor students, it is perhaps more vital now than ever to revise conceptualizations of schooling to treat differently issues that affect these students' education. True, many school systems across nation have attempted to address minority concerns. But often these attempts have been either prescriptive, to offset problems which are nationally documented, or reactionary, to solve problems which have often already progressed too far. Exacerbating the flawed planning premises, though agencies may develop grand objectives for success for minority students, these objectives frequently do not acknowledge the ethnic peculiarities of these students. Instead, plans for minority students often perpetuate the underlying theme of making "them" more like the majority. Further worsening the situation, while these plans emanate from administrative offices and much time consumption, the plans sometimes do not include components to adequately address training of staff, implementation, assessment, nor are they built on planning schemes that provide structure for further planning within individual schools. In short, school systems, must provide means and protocols by which their plans may be effectively extrapolated, implemented and evaluated throughout the organization.

Furthermore, plans addressing minority issues should also include more focus on obtaining input and support from the minority community. A major problem is the perception that minorities are often planned for and not planned with. In addition, school systems should be certain to develop plans which genuinely speak to the idiosyncrasies of their minority communities and staffs, not plans molded from generic norms and merely pasted to those groups. When planning for any students, and especially minority students, plans must be strategic and reach for the ideal. Too often plans for minority students are constructed from a deficit perspective. These plans are more frequently reactive than proactive.

Approaching Planning: Avoiding Pitfalls

Education institutionally must remain open to constant transformation. In a rapidly changing global environment with its international competition, technological transitions, shifting demographics, and ecological concerns, education must continuously evolve to produce to meet the demands of a society and workforce that require new knowledge, new skills, and, thus, new learning. Organizations can not depend on reform occurring by chance or evolving from institutional archetypes. Reform must be intentional; therefore, perhaps now more than ever, there is need for incisive planning.

There appear to be three common states of being that plague education planning – **the Unplan**, the **Ex Post Facto Plan**, and the **Situational Plan** – all of which are doomed to failure and lack organizational commitment. The Unplan occurs when an organization usually has a high morally driven mission and goals; however, the actions to accomplish these aims are not fully developed and documented. Organizations operating in the unplan mode often depend on communication between line staff and job descriptions to accomplish desired results. Checks and balances and benchmarks are more dependent upon meetings and discussions. In this condition , standards are left to interpretation. The Ex Post Facto or After the Fact Plan, for all lack of intents and purposes, on the surface may contain all the elements of a plan. However, this type of plan is driven more by

the past than any vision of the future. The process by which this plan is developed usually consists of organizations asking various departments or offices to compile their current efforts. This approach serves more as a tool to garner public relations and give the impression of intense activity. In truth, however, it is more indicative of justification of activities within the organization than an intent to move in any visionary direction.   This plan does not challenge the organization and its various levels of staff to step outside the box, rather it pads the box. Organizations that operate under such planning tend to remain static, experiencing minimal to negligible progress over time. The final approach involves the Situational Plan, not to be confused with situational management, decision- making, or leadership. This approach to planning is very temporary and tentative. Again, it does not stimulate or require much long-term thought. It is born of reaction. Essentially, there is no master plan, but many little plans that are developed in response to various circumstances. These circumstances may include pressures from stakeholders or legislative compliance issues. This type of plan usually reflects efforts that are more akin to stop-gap measures. It is also geared to maintaining the status quo. The above mis-approaches to planning can continue for years, until inevitable crisis or cataclysm intervenes. The ironic aspect of these plans is that, while they breed dysfunction and disequilibrium, organizations can continue over time in these modes and appear very busy working toward their goals.   For after for a while, dysfunction can become functional.

Basically, a plan must be accompanied by an intent to act to accomplish specified goals and objectives over a certain time period. In the case of a strategic plan, this period may comprise 3 to 5 years. Accordingly, revision of the plan continues during this time to ascertain, through the benchmarks and milestones installed in the plan, whether these goals or objectives are being met. If they are not, the reason should be identified and the plan amended. Progress occurs on a continuum; it is incremental. For example, to state that "in 12 years, we will close the achievement gap," while a positive goal, means little when not accompanied by a set of actions, timeline, and benchmarks to gauge intervening progress during that 12 year period. In essence, such a statement without adequate back-up serves only one purpose; it buys time for time sake.

Distinguishing Planning Processes

There a few types of plans to consider. The dilemma is that often these plans that are intended to address specific circumstances are presented as systemic master plans. Or worse, organizations often take a bunch of mini-plans and just join them with a few well placed segues and present them as the master plan. Basically, the system is not much better off than it would have been with no plan at all – since the efforts that arise from such approaches lean toward being disjointed and disconnected. Therefore it is essential to differentiate between needs, program, and strategic planning. While the three protocols may speak to the similar issues, they differ in desired overall results. Needs assessment and program planning tend to focus on intervention(s) to address certain issues or problems; whereas, strategic planning includes interventions for a school system to reach as closely as possible an optimum state. Needs assessment and program plans are usually of shorter duration and less encompassing than strategic plans, and targeted on specific areas of concern found in the current status. That is not to say that these plans do not include the future. However, the expectation on which these plans are based is not as future oriented as that of the strategic plan. Appropriately, these plans are more in reaction to contemporary states of affair and less oriented to future dispositions. These plans, due to their nature, lean more toward problem solving rather than future possibilities.

Planning for the Possible, Not the Probable

Strategic planning is about the possible and derives from a "can do" philosophy. It doesn't focus on "what will be," but on "what ought to be." It is optimistic, not fatalistic. It is flexible, not inextricably encased in structure. It must be predictive and proactive. It stresses the future, not justifies the present or the past. Successful strategic planning maintains the fragile balance between the ideal and reality. Strategic plans are anticipatory and project preferable futures. They center on what could happen if we pursue agreed upon organizational outcomes. Still, the strategic plan must reflect a practical, objective reality. There is certainly a difference between planning toward the ideal and planning for the impossible.

It is unwise to plan for impossibilities. Plans steeped in impossibilities become sources of frustration and pose their own obstacles to implementation. Plans composed for impossibilities lose commitment over time. Additionally, they often raise the ire of a public who respond that the organization knew from the beginning that the plans were not realizable. On the flip side, the plan may be too narrowed just on the probable. Such plans more or less reflect the current capacities of the organization. They do not drive the organization or its constituents to a more favorable state. In fact, these plans are detriments to progress; essentially, we are planning for what would have probably occurred with little to no intervening change with how business has been conducted ordinarily.

Master Planning

Why do strategic plans as instruments fail? They usually fail if one or more of the following conditions exist – they are developed from a reactive stance; they reflect an inability to change with circumstances; they contain too may quick fixes; or, they include piecemeal strategies. With so many factors impacting educational organizations, development and implementation of effective plans are essential. The call for higher standards, whether national, state, or local, must also refer to raising standards in planning. Planning, if not approached properly, causes its own dilemma. In many organizations, there appear to be a plethora of plans – disjointed and tripping over one another. Often creating the plan becomes an end in itself. In this instance, the plan becomes a substitute for action and may actually thwart progress. One symptom of this phenomenon occurs in educational agencies when there are a multitude of plans that are often not connected to one another in any meaningful way. In this situation, the right hand frequently does know, or, for that matter, does not care what the left is doing. To worsen the matter, various segments of the organization may be following their own plans based on little more than isolated interpretations of the agencies mission and with limited accountability. With too many plans, the efforts become disguised, and the required reforms become subsumed in the various planning processes.

Planning can not be done just for the sake of it – a plan for this and a plan for that. In light of recent demands for reform in education, efficacious planning is paramount for the success of students. To that end, there must be a master plan that each department or office or school within a state or local system can use to draw upon as an anchor for its individual action planning in order to accomplish the necessary reforms. It is much more efficient to extract elements from a master plan to fulfill certain state or federal requirements than it is to develop a plan as separate mandates occur. The plan should also contain accountability mechanisms that preclude any individuals or groups from

just arbitrarily altering initiatives. Again, it is important that there be consistency among local plans, so that the plans are readily comprehended by those within the local system as well as other publics. Strategic plans reflect many operational aspects of an organization and are indicative of how an organization functions to address its mission. When plans are properly constructed and include the appropriate components that have evolved from a suitable process, they are more likely to be successful.

Planning and Stakeholders

Predominant in truly effective planning is the meaningful involvement of stakeholders in the process. Educational plans sometimes become so hung-up on process that the intent of the plan is diminished. While stakeholders must be involved, it must be quality involvement. Stakeholders must be involved in meaningful ways at appropriate stages during planning. Often plans are dedicated more to stakeholders approval than to doing what is necessary for sound educational reform. Such planning approaches become bogged down in meetings and structural impediments such as committees, task forces, and sub committees, which are geared more to gain approval than substantive input.   When and how should community be involved? Community members should be involved at crucial points before, during, and after the planning process. There is no need for a community to be involved in the actual technical construction of the plan. Professionals who have expertise in this area can do this for the community. However, the community should play a key role early in establishing plan components, such as the mission, beliefs, and analysis of the status of the school system related to education of students. All stakeholders must be involved in order to arrive at a consensus about related to needs and future direction. Along this line, the community should also be called upon to review the plan to ascertain that its best interests have been addressed. Planning is not a static endeavor, where some document in stone is produced. Planning is ongoing, and plans should be developed to be revised as circumstances and priorities change.
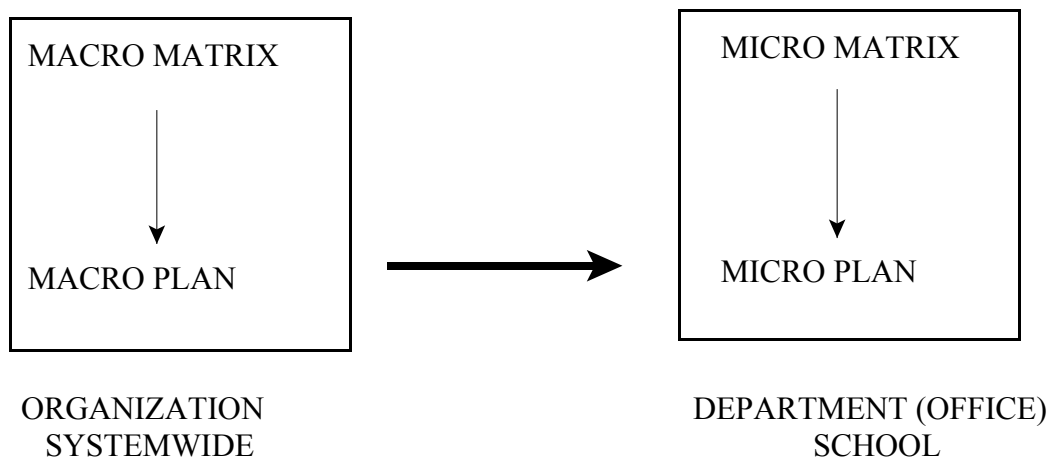
Macro to Micro – Matrix to Plan

Plans often comprise hefty documents. When presented by themselves as finished products, middle managers and staff are frequently left little alternative other than to just scour the document to look for what applies to them and then begin to develop their action plans in relative isolation. One of the main detriments to any plan being actualized is the lapse in communication within an organization related to the plan and the planning process. Too frequently, organizational plans are developed in committee, and aside from the individuals actually involved in that work, the rest of the organization sees only a relatively finished product – the plan. There may remain little hint of true intent of the process or incentive for buy-in by those who have to perform the implementation.. Rather, the plan may be misinterpreted as a grand directive or list of things to do.   The logical questions for anyone viewing a plan are, "Where am I in this? What do I have to do? Why will I be doing it?"   If there is no mechanism to help form these vital connections, subsequent dialogs, which could be directed to the next stages of planning or implementation, becoming time-consuming sessions concentrated on explaining the plan and deriving a rationale for each component. The matrix provides a mechanism to prevent this problem.

As discussed earlier, there should be explicit connections among the various levels of planning. At this point, the concept of development of macro and micro matrices to lead to corresponding types

of plans proves useful. The starting point, of course is the master or macro matrix. This is the overall matrix for the organization. The macro matrix assists in the development of the state education agency or local school system-wide strategic plan. The macro matrix then functions as an effective communication tool for further planning at other levels. This matrix is useful here because it simultaneously captures the global picture, shows the interrelationship of roles among the multiple stakeholders, and targets the areas of intervention.   In addition, inclusion of a matrix provides staff and other planners with a feeling of genuine involvement in the planning process and a basis for formulating their departmental or site based (school) plans. Next, as the central management developed a macro matrix prior to the produce the macro plan for the organization, each department or school should use that macro matrix to develop its own micro matrix and then plan.   As the diagram below indicates, this approach concretizes a context for planning by enhancing the connection in content and the fluidity of the planning process.

Regarding planning within local school systems, schools, and departments, the Matrix may be used as a background tool for both system level, central office, and school-based planning. The Macro-Matrix phase is led by the Superintendent or his/her designee. It involves preparation of a Matrix that is core to the entire school system and includes issues that are evident throughout the system in general. This macro matrix is devised using input from various stakeholders and has the most global view. The Macro- Matrix should not consume excessive time for development. It provides a guide and coordination mechanism, for schools and individual central offices as they participate in developing their Micro-Matrixes. Office plans and school improvement plans may be guided by the process and content of Macro-Matrix. Moreover, using this approach maintains logical relationships between different planning components at various stages.

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┌──────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────┐
│   MACRO MATRIX       │              │   MICRO MATRIX       │
│         │            │              │         │            │
│         ↓            │   ────────▶  │         ↓            │
│   MACRO PLAN         │              │   MICRO PLAN         │
└──────────────────────┘              └──────────────────────┘
     ORGANIZATION                          DEPARTMENT (OFFICE)
      SYSTEMWIDE                                 SCHOOL
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Using the Matrix for Planning

As a tool, the Matrix Framework may be used to enhance the planning processes by providing a simplified context in which to consider complex factors and variables that impact the organization within and without.
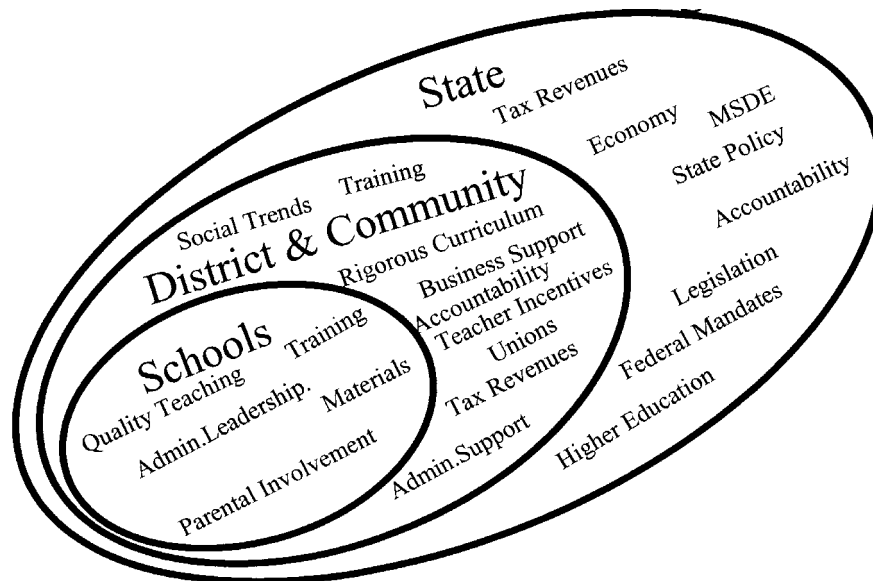
Based on concept © Dr. Joe A. Hairston

The Matrix is useful during pre-planning and the actual planning. At the pre-planning stage, compiling the Matrix tables enables us to condense information about crucial factors that must be addressed in order to accelerate student achievement. The process of developing the Matrix table in itself encourages discussion about many objectives and strategies that will positively impact achievement and the operation of the organization. This process also enables us to prioritize issues as well as consider ways in which to align strategies with factors such as community needs, federal mandates, and state planning requirements.

> **Pre-planning**
>
> • **Encapsulates Big Picture**
>
> • **Captures Exigencies**
>
> • **Reinforces Alignment**
>
> • **Summarizes Stakeholders'**

The Matrix, when used as a preface and a reference during the actual planning, intensifies the

alignment of the resources, strategies, and actors. In other words, it captures implicitly and explicitly the state of affairs in a simple manner and enables the use of that information to strategically plan for optimum outcomes. The Matrix helps planners gain perspective on plans, before, during and after the actual planning process. Too frequently, production of the plan becomes an end in itself, subsuming that for which the plan is intended. In fact, plans sometimes fail due to missing links inherent in either the planning discipline or the process. The Matrix helps assure that those links are attended through the matrix cells.

The Matrix Framework helps bring focus to the whole and it parts at once – from preparing to plan through plan evaluation.. The Framework aids us as we set priorities for goals and objectives. A finished matrix provides a snap shot of the conditions of a local system or a school. It can also serve as a brainstorming device as well as a stimulant for dialog in identifying cogent information to include in a strategic plan. Developing a matrix as a preface to planning aids throughout the remainder of the process. The Matrix, by its very nature, provides a rationale for strategies and actions in the plan. As a foundation for planning, it avoids plunging stakeholders into the quagmire of searching the plan for their roles. It shows potential activities in the context of their inter-relationship to one another as well as to the mission and goals of the organization. At its simplest level, the Matrix provides an anchor by linking objectives and strategies with specified areas of intervention. The following figure illustrates how the Matrix Framework relates to planning components.

The Matrix and Strategic Plan Components

STATEMENT OF BELIEFS
MISSION STATEMENT

M A T R I X

PLANNING POLICIES

INTERNAL ANALYSIS Strengths, Weaknesses, Organizational Structure

EXTERNAL ANALYSIS Threats, Environment, Competition

GOALS

OBJECTIVES

STRATEGIES

ACTION PLANS

MATRIX PLANNING ACTIVITIES

The following pages contain activities that provide a sampling of ways in which the Matrix Framework can be used to assist in planning.

Activity 1: Identifying Actors, Agents, and Roles

Directions: Different Actors or Change Agents play specialized roles in addressing disparities between performance and standards experienced by minority or any other students. Complete the table below by indicating in the appropriate cells by listing the role(s) or responsibilities of Local or State Central Office Staff to close the gaps in the listed Areas of Effect. (Table 2 may be used as a guide for this activity.)

Area of Effect: Source of Disparity

AGENT	Among Students within Schools	Among Schools within District
CENTRAL OFFICE		

Activity 2: The Matrix and Critical Analysis

The Matrix can serve as a diagnostic tool when looking at conditions in the school system. This segment of planning is referred to as internal/external analysis or critical analysis. At this point the agency or school system looks at its strength, weaknesses, and opportunities to improve, potential threats from within and without the organization related to accomplishing its mission, in this case achievement for all students. The Matrix brings focus to this procedure. Some organizations perform this vital activity by sending out memos to staff and community that ask generalized questions such as "What do you consider to be our strengths and weaknesses as a school system?" The responses often cover the spectrum from the cogently relevant to the absolutely irrelevant. Just dealing with this type of non-specific data can become a chore in itself, consuming time and energy.   Thus, the Matrix functions as a tool early-on to assist at the staff level in preliminarily gathering this cogent information.

Area of Effect

Area of Intervention
Quality classroom teachers

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats

Activity 3: The Matrix and Critical Analysis

During planning, it is vital to conduct an a critical analysis that encompasses factors from the internal as well as external environment, which will affect accomplishment of an organization's mission and goals from the internal as well as external environment. This part of planning process focuses on identifying strengths and weakness from within the organization (internal) and then in relationship to the wider community of stakeholders (external). It is important that this activity not become an exercise in labeling "what's good or bad" about an educational agency or school. Factors are classified according to strengths and weakness so that they may addressed where necessary or appropriately in the plan. Ergo, both strengths and weaknesses may reflect opportunities for improvement.

The "Internal Analysis" examines in the inner-workings of the school system in relationship to its vision, mission, and goals. This planning component focuses on factors that impact the organization internally via staff, clients, community stakeholders, and resource inputs. The following two tables demonstrate means of accumulating information for an internal analysis. In the first table, "Internal Analysis by Degrees," strengths and weaknesses are diagnosed for level of intensity. (Examples of possible cell entries are included in the table for demonstration purposes only.) The second table, "Areas of Intervention: Internal Analysis," employs a similar approach but uses categories from the Matrix. It is important to note that neither method is exclusive of the other. In fact both may be used to capture a definitive picture.

Directions: This activity looks at an important part of the planning process for any school system or state education agency – the identification of where it is strong on the inside as well as in relation to the community it serves. We are going to use two methods. Neither method is exclusive of the other. The first approach uses the typical, mandatory "focus areas," and the second approach uses "areas of intervention" consistent with the matrix. What is unique about both approaches is that we have to not only identify strengths and weaknesses, we have to place them on a gradient that suggests levels of strength and weakness. Together the two methods provide planners with a comprehensive analysis from different perspectives.

To begin, take a couple of minutes to review the descriptions of the various "Areas of Intervention" on the sheet "**Framework" for the Achievement Initiative for Maryland's Minority Students."**

Now, add some entries to the first table, **"Internal Analysis by Degrees**," being sure to place those entries in the appropriate cells indicating levels of strength or weakness.

When done, turn attention to the second table, **"Matrix Areas of Intervention: Internal Analysis,"** and add some entries. The major difference in this table is that it uses "Areas of Intervention" from the Matrix Framework.

Next, add some entries to the cells in the second table. Information from the first table may used here also.

"Framework" for the Achievement Initiative for Maryland's Minority Students[1]

The topics above represent key areas of intervention to address in order to eliminate gaps enhance achievement among all students. The list includes broad topics to stimulate thought and specification related by an educational agency, local system or school. Goals for the optimum educational results for students are implicit in each indicated area.

Essentially, we will improve academic achievement for Maryland's minority students, increase the proportion of members of <u>all</u> groups who are high achievers, and approach educational equity if we are able to put in place *all* of the following:

1.   ***Recruitment, selection, and retention of personnel who can deliver high quality instruction and who can rapidly learn to deploy improved instructional methods***.   The recruitment, selection and retention of high quality teachers is especially problematic in schools serving minority and less affluent populations where we observe such things as low ratios of applicants to hires and the voluntary transfer of teachers out of such schools.

2.   ***Equitable and wide-spread access to appropriate high-level educational opportunities***. All students, regardless of race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic background, or disability must be assured access to rigorous and appropriate curriculum and instruction. We must increase the number of minority youths participating in gifted and talented programs at all levels and enrolled in advanced placement courses in high schools. Disparities in access to advanced mathematics and other courses that prepare students for college and careers requiring complex skills must be eliminated.

3.   ***Data-based feedback on educational outcomes for <u>all</u> students at all levels of educational systems***. Educators at all levels should set goals for the educational outcomes of *all groups* of students and use information from achievement assessments to monitor progress for students of all ethnic groups and of both sexes. Assessment data should be used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of educational systems, schools, and individual teachers' practices and used to improve these systems, schools, and practices.

4.   ***Initially well prepared and continually re-prepared (re-trained) teachers and administrators***. To provide high quality instructional services to students of all of Maryland's ethnic groups, educators must not only be initially well prepared as a result of formal education, but they will require ongoing professional development to prepare them to serve the state's increasingly diverse population.

5.   ***Quality preschool preparation for school.*** Ethnic minority students and children from economically disadvantaged families should no longer start school with an educational disadvantage. High quality preschool preparation, including attention to language and cognitive development, behavioral health, nutrition, and other aspects of physical health – with a focus on economically disadvantaged minority children – will set the stage for high achievement in subsequent years.

6.   ***Identification and intervention when any student falls behind expected educational progress***. Frequent assessments of educational progress should be used identify individuals who

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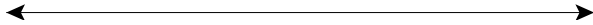[1]AIMMS Steering Committee, Revised May 2, 2002.

are not performing up to their potentials with respect to achievement, attendance, or school performance – with appropriate interventions applied in a timely fashion. Diagnostic processes should distinguish learning disabilities from cultural differences so that inappropriate assignment of ethnic minorities to special education categories is avoided and so that minority achievement is accelerated by learning interventions.

7.   ***Students, parents, teachers, administrators, board members, and legislators are committed to high levels of academic achievement for all groups of students***. The mechanisms that will lead to high levels of achievement for Maryland's minority students – and indeed for all of our students – are complex. High achievement requires hard work, students must dedicate themselves to educational effort over a period of many years. This requires each young person to adopt the personal identity of serious scholar and to set ambitious personal standards for effort and the quality of educational performances. Parents must consistently encourage their children to aim for high educational achievement – not only in the long run but also in their day-to-day undertakings. Regardless of background or level of economic resources, every family must attend to young peoples' educational effort and reward effort with approval. Teachers must resolve that the minority children they teach will achieve at high levels in their classes and conduct their instruction so that this resolve is realized in student outcomes. Administrators must be committed to increasing the achievement of minority and economically disadvantaged students, lead schools and school systems in planning for greater achievement, arrange necessary training for staff, and regularly supervise personnel to see that they are implementing instruction and other activities to bring about the achievement goals. Board members must express their commitment to minority achievement in selecting and overseeing the work of administrators, and in allocating resources to schools and programs. The challenge of eliminating disparities in educational outcomes is great, and it will not be overcome without resolution and resources. We must be able to count on state policy makers and legislators to demand equity, to provide the resources needed to implement all of the above, and to align the efforts of everyone on our common goal.

Internal Analysis by Degrees
Major Internal Strengths and Weaknesses

Focus Area	Strengths	←	→	Weaknesses
Students		Diverse student population	Wider range of special needs	
Faculty/Staff				
Parents/Community				
Governance/ Administration				
Instruction				
Fiscal Resources and Support	Established budget process			
Physical Infrastructure				Maintenance backlog

Matrix Areas of Intervention: Internal Analysis

Area of Intervention	Strengths	← →		Weaknesses
Quality Personnel and Instruction (Recruitment, Retention, Training)				
Equitable High Level Opportunity (Access to Rigorous and Appropriate Curriculum)				
Feed Back On Outcomes (Data-Based Decision Making)				
Quality Preschool				
Identification and intervention				
Commitment to Achievement				

Activity 4: The Matrix and Developing Strategies

The Matrix Table (see blank Matrix Table and Table 1) helps us brainstorm to consider strategies or reconsider approaches that have been tried without success to obtain objectives and goals. Just as objectives follow goals, strategies are based on specific objectives. If not handled correctly, developing strategies becomes more like composing a To Do List. The following activity is intended to expedite decisions about the potential of strategies. This activity is about using components of the Matrix to develop strategies to prepare for action planning. Before starting, refer to the document *"Matrix Table Framework for Central Office."* For this activity, also refer to Table 1 earlier in this handbook. Many of the cells in that table show strategies to be pursued to increase achievement. Also refer to the **"Definitions and Examples"** sheet. This activity can help planners to arrive at strategies that central office staff or other actors can formulate to address achievement disparities.

- **Objectives** – specific statements of measurable, observable, or demonstrable outcomes to accomplish the mission and goals of the system. Objectives a more exact statements of components of a goal, which must be accomplished for that goal to be achieved

Below are the characteristics of sound objectives and an example.

Objectives > must reflect mission and relate to a goal
> must impact be results oriented
> must be measurable, demonstrable, or observable in terms of time, money, quality, quantity (Objective must have at least two of the above factors, for example, time and quality, to be valid)
> should represent incremental attainment of goals

Example:

To have 80% of female fifth grade students achieving at satisfactory level per MSPAP math test by June, 2003.)

The governance system will include structures to facilitate involvement of at least 75% of minority parents by 2004.

Upon graduation, all high school seniors will have experienced activities that enable them to show leadership and responsibility to the community.

- **Strategies** means by which an objective, and ultimately a goal, will be accomplished; broad statements of approaches an organization, department, office, or school will take to reach objective(s).

Strategies – tell how objectives will be met in broad terms
– provide a means by which the objective(s) and thus the goal will be achieved
– will eventually involve commitment of resources

Example:

The LSS will develop a sequential, comprehensive curriculum in the reading content area.

The LSS will partner with businesses and agencies from both the public and private sectors to develop programs that enable students to experientially learn and practice leadership skills.

- **Critical Benchmark** – key decision, agreement, or action is necessary to move forward with the strategy. In every instance, you may or may not have a critical benchmark. But sometimes, there is a an action or decision that is so critical that it will impede the strategy to the point that you can not use it. An example of that is if you choose to extend the school year. If the state board will definitely not allow that critical benchmark, then the strategy may become useless. If a CB cannot be reached then the strategy can not be deployed, or the strategy may be revised. This analysis can save time by eliminating strategies or helping us develop alternatives prior to action planning.

Matrix Framework: Developing Strategies

Directions: Compose one or more strategies for each Area of Intervention to accomplish the following objective. "70% percent of all 8th grade African American students will score at satisfactory or better in MSPAP mathematics by June, 2004." Refer to "Definitions" sheet for examples of strategy statements.

High Quality Teaching/Quality personnel and instruction	
Access to Rigorous Curriculum/ Equitable high-level opportunity	
Data-Based Decision Making/ Feedback on Outcomes	
Quality Pre-school/ Early Learning Interventions	
Identification, Intervention/	
Commitment to Achievement	

Activity 5: Unpacking the Matrix

This activity involves unpacking the Matrix into a preliminary stage prior to action planning. In the real world, this activity would be completed by a task force, committee, particular office, or department. Please use the *"Unpacking the Matrix"* form. For this practice, the Area of Effect is always "Among Schools within a District," and the Actor/Agent is always "Central Office Administration." Select an area(s) of intervention and then complete each segment accordingly. To save time you may refer again to the "**Matrix Framework Table**" and to the "**Definitions**" page from the preceding activity.

Unpacking the Matrix

Area of Effect:

Among schools within district

Area of Intervention:

Actors/Agency(s):

Central Office Administration

Objective:
Strategy:
Critical Benchmark (What key decision, agreement, or action is necessary to move forward with the strategy?) :
Data Monitoring (How and what will be measured):
Resources (Fiscal, Physical, and Human):
Obstacles:

Maryland State Board of Education